

that we could possibly confront in foreign policy position, there was one that was conspicuous for its absence, one spot in the world that was never mentioned, one nation that was never brought to the attention of the Committee on International Relations or, as a matter of fact, it has not been brought to the attention of this Nation by this administration, and that is the nation of Sudan.

There, as the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) said so eloquently a little bit ago, in the last 15 years, over 2 million people have died in that civil war. That is more than have died in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda combined. Yet, in the face of this tragedy, what we have seen has been a lackluster attempt on the part of this administration to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I was asked by a teacher at Highline Community School, which is in the Cherry Creek School District in my District, a class again to which my colleague, the gentleman from Virginia, referred, I was asked by her to deliver a message to the Secretary of State; and I did.

The message was in the form of a question from Ms. Vogel, the teacher of this class, this fourth and fifth grade class, to the Secretary of State; and it said essentially this, "Why is it that you, the government of our own country, and members of the world community, have decided to turn a blind eye to the tortured land of the Sudan?"

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And I communicated that concern to the Secretary and I got a response, a written response, from someone in her office. I delivered that response yesterday to the school in my district. It was one of the most incredible experiences of the time I have spent in public life; to look at these children and this teacher, who have committed and dedicated themselves to the ominous task of raising money to free human beings that have been dragged into slavery in a country all the way around the world.

This class read about this situation over a year ago and became so concerned that they organized a group that is now worldwide. They call it STOP, Slavery That Oppresses People. It has raised over \$100,000. This 4th grade class in Highline Community School has raised \$100,000 and purchased the freedom of over 1,000 individuals in the Sudan. Mr. Speaker, in the entire world we have been able to muster enough support to purchase the freedom the a total of 5,000, yet 1,000 come from this one classroom, this one elementary school. It is really quite extraordinary, and it was an extraordinary day yesterday.

I will enter them into the RECORD, but I want to read a couple of the cards I received yesterday. Each student wrote a personal card, a personal mes-

sage to me, and some of them are really quite moving. I will not go through them all, but just some of them. And, remember, these are, again, 5th graders.

"Our hearts are noble, so we use the noble heart to do good for others." By Dong Cho.

"Dear Congressman: Hi, I'm Christina Manalostas. We bring love and courage from our life, and give it to others in sadness."

"God must have put us here on earth for a reason. That reason was not to put people in slavery or to separate races. He put us here to live free, to have freedom. He just wanted to give everyone an opportunity for everything. Love, Charles."

"There is nothing worse than seeing a person suffer for what they believe in." Deven Eastman.

I can go on and on like that, Mr. Speaker, but I will not. I will enter them into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

I will tell my colleagues that what these children have done and what they are continuing to do far surpasses the efforts that the whole government of the United States has put forward to date, and I simply want to commend them and thank them from the bottom of my heart for such an inspirational day as I spent yesterday.

The personal messages referred to above are as follows:

I thank God for using these children to remind me of the true spirit of giving! We have love for all people in the world!

BARB VOGEL.

"Caring is living the meaning of life."—Richard Lucas, Age 13, Upper Arlington, OH.

If we can eradicate slavery then the world will be a better place.

Love,

CYNTHIA JARANGO.

"Maybe if we looked deep inside ourselves we would find the roots of today's problems and also the solutions. Man creates problems through his temptation; maybe he could solve them through caring."—Alicia Hartman, Age 17, Northeast, PA.

A lot of beautiful souls are in slavery and it needs to stop.

KRISTIN YOUNG.

"A nation with citizens who care and look out for each other is a great nation; it will not fall apart."—Dwain Simmons, Age 14, Houston, TX.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN DAN: Thank you for coming to our class. Also, thank you for supporting our campaign. I am an abolitionist and my name is Lè Shai.

Sincerely,

LÈ SHAI.

When you put your mind to something, you can achieve anything.

JOSHUA FLEMING.

If we didn't eradicate slavery how would other people be free?

Sincerely,

DAVID WALKER.

Power is in people! Don't be lazy take action to help others.

Love,

ALEX J. PERSINGER.

Even though Frederick Douglass is dead, I still believe that his spirit lives in every abolitionist in the world.

MELVIN HARMON.

The greatest power of our time is love for all people!

Love,

THOMAS TURNER.

Unless the world is perfect, without any problems, we need to take a stand and help others.

LINDY DESPAIN.

The world needs the caring majority.

Love,

ALPHONSO McDONALD.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN: I would like to thank you for joining our campaign. We appreciate your work.

Love,

JAMES COLEMAN.

Slavery is wrong, and someone needs to take a stand. Adults are not doing enough, so kids are doing something more.

NICOLE CIMINO.

We can't have just a little group of abolitionists we need a large group.

Love,

JOSH HOOK.

There is a sin, from the past, it is slavery and kids are doing something about it!

Love,

MIRIAM MORENO.

God made us different, because He knew that we would be beautiful!

STACY CARUSO.

Freedom is one of the world's greatest treasures. What has happened to it?

DONI TAIKALUS.

Our hearts are noble, so use the noble heart to do good for others.

DONG CHO.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN: Hi, I'm Christina Manalastas. We bring love and courage from our life, and give it to others in sadness.

Sincerely,

CHRISTINA MANALASTAS.

God must have put us here on earth for a reason. That reason was not to put people in slavery, or to separate races. He put us here to live free, to have freedom. He just wanted to give everyone an opportunity for everything.

Love,

CHARLES.

There is nothing worse than seeing a person suffer for what they believe in.

KEVEN EASTMAN.

CUBA REMAINS A STALINIST STATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the past few weeks the Castro dictatorship has initiated an all-out crackdown on the internal opposition and the independent press, who day after day fight for freedom, for democracy and for human rights in Cuba.

Yesterday, under strict secrecy, four of Cuba's most prominent dissidents, Felix Bonne, Marta Beatriz Roque, Vladimiro Roca and Rene Gomez Manzano were put on trial after spending almost 600 days in prison with no charges filed against them.

The crime committed by these four freedom-loving individuals: Drafting a document that criticizes the Cuban communist regime's repressive policies. And it was entitled "The Homeland Belongs to All of Us." This document called for the establishment of democracy in Cuba and the holding of free elections on the island. The dissidents now face up to 5 years in prison and more on these trumped-up charges.

It has been reported that dozens of independent journalists and other dissidents were summarily rounded up this past weekend on the eve of the trial. The purpose of this massive wave of arrests was to assure that opponents of the regime did not tell the international community of the Roman circus that the dictatorship dares to call a fair and a just trial.

Despite the strengthening totalitarian nature of the Castro regime, the internal opposition in Cuba continues to work tirelessly to call to the attention of the world the plight of the Cuban people. In response to the valiant efforts of the Cuban internal opposition, merely 2 weeks ago Fidel Castro imposed yet a new law on the island that punishes up to 15 and more years in jail any Cuban who disseminates what the regime considers counterrevolutionary information.

Leading human rights organizations around the world have noted the intensification of human rights abuses on the island of Cuba. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the recently released U.S. State Department Human Rights Report all concur that the Cuban regime continues to systematically violate the fundamental civil and political rights of all of its citizens.

Cuba today remains the Stalinist state that it has been for 40 years under Fidel Castro. The rights of freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of religion, and all of the other rights that free men and women enjoy are denied to the Cuban people. The latest crackdown is but the most recent example of this four-decade old nightmare that has engulfed the island.

Mr. Speaker, the United States Congress must continue to raise our voice in support of the freedom fighters in Cuba who day in and day out put their lives on the line to create a Democratic opening on the island.

Last year, during his visit to Cuba, Pope John Paul II called on the Castro dictatorship to open up Cuba to the world. A year after the Pontiff's visit, Castro has not even opened Cuba up to its own people. On the contrary, the regime continues to tighten the noose of repression around the necks of the people of the island.

The people of Cuba need the solidarity of the United States and all the nations of the world. Let us not turn our backs on them at this critical time.

This week my congressional colleagues and I will be submitting a resolution which will detail facts on the Castro regime and on the international community. We call upon the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva to help the Cuban people, because this provides a forum for discussing the human rights situation throughout the world, for condemning abuses and gross violations of these liberties, and for establishing an international mechanism to express support for the protection and defense of these inherent natural rights.

The actions taken by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights establishes a precedence for a further course of action, and it sends a message to the international community that the protection and promotion of human rights is indeed still a priority for all of us. The universal declaration of human rights guides global human rights policy and it asserts that all human beings are born free and should live in dignity with rights.

Religious freedom in Cuba is severely restrained, and we have clergy and lay people who are suffering sustained repression by the Cuban state security apparatus.

The government of Cuba continues to violate the rights of the child as well by engaging in child labor and in child prostitution. It routinely restricts workers' rights, including the right to form independent unions.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be vigilant in fighting against these violations, and we call on the international community to help us in this hour of need.

PRESERVING, PROTECTING, AND ENHANCING SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next hour, a number of Members, Democrats here in the House, want to explore with our colleagues and with the American people our commitment to preserving and protecting and enhancing our Social Security System.

It is my belief that Social Security is one of the best programs that ever came out of this House of Representatives and this Congress and this Nation.

If we reflect back on the history of this program to a time in this very chamber in the 1930s, a time when most of our seniors were left in poverty, left often in disgrace to live destitute in their final years in this country after having built it into the great country that it is, and we reflect back on that time and compare it to the standard of living available to most seniors in this country today, it is a remarkable development. Over the course of some 60-plus years, thanks to the leadership of the great Franklin Delano Roosevelt and a Democratic Congress, we have a Social Security System that really is something that all of us can be very thankful for.

That was a system that came into effect over very significant Republican opposition, and it took from the 1930s until the 1960s, decades of effort by Democrats in this Congress to move to the second pillar that is so important to the security of our seniors, and that is Medicare.

When my fellow Texan, Lyndon Johnson, signed Medicare into law to assure that those who had some retirement security also had a certain element of health security, nine out of ten of our Republican colleagues in this House, nine out of ten, voted no. They did not believe in Medicare.

And so I think it is important, as we begin what I hope will be a bipartisan effort to bring us together to resolve the issues now about Social Security, that we do so in a bipartisan fashion, not bound by our history, but we also must be mindful of our history. And much of the history of the viewpoints brought to this debate about Social Security is really fairly recent.

The current leader of the Republican House group, the majority leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), my colleague from Texas, has a far different attitude about Social Security and about Medicare than I have had and that our great President Lyndon Johnson had, and I believe that most Texans have about Social Security. He has referred to it, back in 1984, as "a bad retirement" and "a rotten trick" on the American people. And he said, just a few years ago, that "I would never have created the Social Security System."

In addition to the comments about Social Security, he said of Medicare, after the Republicans took control of this House, "I resent the fact that when I am 65 I must enroll in Medicare. I deeply and profoundly resent that," he said. "It is an imposition on my life."

So we know that at least when some of the leadership of the Republican Party here in the House come to discuss Social Security and Medicare,